[fic] Deal Making.

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Title: Deal Making.
Fandom: Supernatural.
Rating: PG.
Warnings: None.
Pairings/Characters: Gabriel/Michael.
Word Count: 1,727 words.
Summary: Michael searches for Gabriel, and asks a pagan to help him find his missing brother.
Note: This is the seventeenth of my Christmas gift fics, and this one is a specific

present to **synnerxx**. She wanted Michael/Gabriel with past!Michael/Lucifer and I think I got close to that. This wound up more plotty than expected, but I hope she likes it. It's set after Gabriel left but before SPN started properly.

(He reminds himself that he can always say no, and find Gabriel through another means. He has no guarantee that this pagan is even telling the truth.)

He has not visited Earth for such a long time, and he has spent no time consorting with the pagans who also walk upon the Earth.

Michael cannot explain why *now* feels like the right time to obtain a vessel and search for his wayward brother. He's already circled the globe, kept his senses open to the presence of anything angelic and questioned every angel he has come across.

He's found nothing. No trace of Gabriel, nothing beyond the legends that have traveled with the humans as they've spread.

It is maddening. He *knows* that Gabriel is not in Heaven, not in Hell, and there are no other places for an angel to flee to, not if they want to remain sane. Gabriel is on Earth, he is certain of it. He just can't figure out *where*, and that - that is maddening. That is what drives him to stop in his tracks and turn, seeking out with more than sight to find the creature that has been watching him - tracking him as he has been traveling.

The creature he finds is a deity, one of the pagan ones, and Michael restrains the disgust he feels upon meeting one of these. He is seeking information, and it would not do to be rude. That might make his task more difficult.

"Oho, now here's a rare sight - what great event has brought one of Heaven's own untouchable angels down to our humble Earth?"

Michael *wants* to be rude. The sarcasm and lack of respect this deity has for him is barely tolerable.

"I am seeking one of my brothers," Michael says, after a pause. "You can help me."

"And how do you figure that?" The god cocks his head to the side, a grin playing on his lips.

"You know me for what I am, and have followed me through his region," Michael says, looking back. "You can find other angels."

"But will I?"

No hesitation: "Yes."

"I should tell you no, just for that arrogance," the god says, and he's serious, but he's grinning. "Tell you what, I'll find this angel for you, provided you're willing to pay my price."

"Which is?" Michael doesn't want to bargain, shouldn't have to bargain, but he's down here to search for Gabriel, not to engage in violence.

"Depends on the angel you want me to find," the god says with a shrug. "If you're looking for a rogue cherub or something, I should be able to find of them easy. And then there's the matter of why, but let's hear which angel you want first."

He had known that it was inevitable, this sharing of names, but he is still reluctant to say it. Gabriel hasn't been home for a long time already, it is an open secret in Heaven -

With gritted teeth and clenched fists Michael reluctantly says, "Gabriel."

He watches the god's eyebrows go up, and he wonders how much the price just increased. He wonders if this was a mistake.

"I know where he is," The god says finally, and Michael immediately doesn't like how amused he looks and sounds. "Spoke with him just the other day, in fact. The problem is, he doesn't want to be found."

"I know that. Get on with it."

"You're going to have to give me a something of immense value if you want me to set up a meeting."

Michael inclines his head. He had known this was coming. "What do you want?" He reminds himself that he can always say no, and find Gabriel through another

means. He has no guarantee that this pagan is even telling the truth.

Something unreadable flits across the god's face, before he names his price: "I wish to see and touch your wings once."

Michael's first instinct is to refuse. This god has no right to request such a thing, has no idea how much allowing another angel - let alone a pagan - to touch his wings is a show of trust and honor -

"I warned you that it'd be a high price."

"That's too high," Michael snaps.

"Gabriel's your brother," the god snaps back, suddenly much closer, almost inches from Michael's face, and then he catches himself, puts a distance between them again. "At least, I thought you two were brothers. Whatever. What'll it be - yes or no?"

There's a long moment of silence, a long tense moment where Michael holds himself still and doesn't think about other hands on his wings, a long moment where the god stands equally stiff and wary.

"If you are lying I will tear you apart," Michael says at last.

"Is that a yes?"

"It is." Michael buries fear under the weight of neccessity and manifests a pair of his wings, not bothering to warn before light floods the clearing.

He's not surprised to see that the god isn't bothered by the light like a human would be, but he is bothered by the absence of expression on the god's face.

There should be awe. Fear. Perhaps even anticipation. Something, anything other than the neutrality he sees.

"It occurs to me that you should know my name," says the god as he approaches, cautiously slow. "Seeing as we're about to get intimate."

Michael folds his wings closer to him, wishes he didn't feel so vulnerable, and says nothing.

"I'm called Loki," Loki says, and Michael thinks that it doesn't matter if he knows his name or not. It matters that Loki is still passively interested, expression barely more than neutral. Compared to how expressive Loki was before this moment, it is making Michael nervous.

Loki reaches out a hand, freezes when Michael reflexively jerks back, and waits patiently for Michael to steady himself.

"Not accustomed to touch, are we?" Loki's tone is mocking, but surprisingly

gentle.

"No, I am not," Michael says softly, thinking of the last he allowed to touch his wings.

"I suppose that if I'm not gentle you'll tear me apart for that, too." Loki offers him a grin, and Michael nods after a moment. He has the strangest urge to smile back, but no. Not when Loki is inches away.

His wings are feathered on this plane, gold in color but flecked with white, shining gently with a light that Michael can no more stifle than he can disguise his true nature.

Loki's fingers are flesh and blood, and no matter how light their touch Michael still hisses to feel it, almost flinches away again as fingers are dragged through his feathers.

It's not painful. It's the opposite of painful. Michael would welcome pain, as pleasure is worse, as are the memories associated with these feelings.

He looks away from Loki and tries to pretend that he's not there, that there are no hands on his wings, burying themselves in his feathers.

Loki ducks under the wing, bumps close to Michael's side as he is suddenly behind the archangel, gliding fingers along the backs of Michael's wings.

"This is - " Michael cuts off as Loki grips the base of his wings. He stifles a helpless moan, turns his head back shakily and tries not to show how much he's affected by the hold. It's at once intimate and dangerous and too much, and all he can think was that this was a bad idea.

There is no way for him to reach Loki, no way to defend himself if Loki decides to hurt him now.

Michael closes his eyes and waits.

"Michael," Loki says, but Michael's focused on how Loki's hands are still holding him. "Michael, listen to me."

"...what do you want?" Michael asks with a whisper. He's not showing fear, he's not afraid.

"To fulfill my end of the bargain without getting hurt, that's all," Loki tells him, leaning in so his nose bumps the back of Michael's neck. "You want to know where Gabriel is."

"That's why you've been allowed this," Michael answers.

"I'll tell you, then," Loki says, and Michael feels him lean closer, whisper in his ear: *"I'm right here, Michael."*

Then there is the familiar feel of Grace behind him, a familiar Voice lurking -

"I've missed you," Gabriel says, louder this time, and Michael can't help but try to turn around, twist in Gabriel's hold to look at him, but he is held firm.

"How - ?" Michael asks, for the moment vulnerable in more ways than one. "Gabriel?"

"I've learned how to hide, brother," Gabriel says with something like a laugh. "I've made a place for myself down here."

"This isn't home."

Gabriel's grip tightens, briefly. "No, it's not."

"Gabriel - "

"Michael, don't say anything. We'll just argue, and I don't want that."

"You left us."

Michael feels Gabriel huff a sigh against his neck, and then there is an arm wrapping around his neck in a one-armed hug. Gabriel's Voice is a quiet tickle against his back, a low hum that Michael feels with his borrowed bones.

"I couldn't bear it." Michael knows exactly what he's talking about. "I had to leave."

This time Michael says nothing.

They stand like that for a minute, maybe longer, before Michael tries to twist again to look at Gabriel.

"No," Gabriel holds him firm again. "Go home, Michael, and stop looking for me. You shouldn't be down here."

Michael wants to say no, wants to protest and drag Gabriel home now like this, but he can't drag him home, and he won't say no when Gabriel is holding him still like this, not when he aches to think of what Gabriel's done.

It's not what he means to say: "I won't take you back to Heaven. You don't belong there." But Michael *hurts*, and he misses Gabriel, and nothing is right, nothing about this is right at all.

"You don't know how right you are," Gabriel answers, and he lets go with one hand. "Goodbye, Michael."

Michael hears the snap of fingers, and then Gabriel is gone, and Michael is left alone.

He stands still for a moment, before folding his wings away from Earth's reality and then he too is gone, returning to Heaven. He found Gabriel, true, but the meeting didn't satisfy any need or want of his at all.

When Raphael asks him later if he found Gabriel, he shakes his head and remains silent.